

Order of Worship for March 17, 2024

Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Opening Hymn: “*Come to Calvary’s Holy Mountain*” – Hymn #435

Confession and Forgiveness p. 203

Service of the Word

Entrance Psalm:

P: Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people,

C: from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!

P: I love the LORD, because He has heard my voice

C: and my pleas for mercy.

P: Because He inclined His ear to me,

C: therefore I will call on Him as long as I live.

P: The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;

C: I suffered distress and anguish.

P: Then I called on the name of the LORD:

C: “O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!”

P: For You have delivered my soul from death,

C: my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

**ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

P: Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people,

C: from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!

Kyrie: (*Lord Have Mercy*) p. 204

Salutation:

P: The Lord be with you,

C: and also with you.

Prayer of the Day:

P: Let us pray... Almighty God, by Your great goodness mercifully look upon Your people that we may be governed and preserved evermore in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Hymn: *“Alas and Did My Savior Bleed”* - **Hymn #437**

Old Testament Lesson: Jeremiah 31:31-34

R: “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put My law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle Lesson: Hebrews 5:1-10

R: For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

So also Christ did not exalt Himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by the Father who said to Him, “You are My Son, today I have begotten you”; as He says also in another place, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.” In the days of His flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the Father who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverence. Although He was a son, He learned obedience through what He suffered. And being made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Holy Gospel: Mark 10:35-45

P: The Holy Gospel according to Saint Mark, the tenth chapter

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to [Jesus] and said to Him, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You.” And Jesus said to them, “What do You want me to do for You?” And they said to Him, “Grant us to sit, one at Your right hand and one at Your left, in Your glory.” Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” And they said to Him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, but to sit at My right hand or at My left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has

been prepared.” And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to Him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon Hymn: “*Since Our Great High Priest, Christ Jesus* - **Hymn #529**

Sermon: “*Melchizedek*” - **Hebrews 5:1-11**

“Melchizedek”—it’s one of those strange names in the Bible. When we pronounce many names in the Bible, we only hope we are saying them right. First of all, what we read are peoples’ attempts on the part of translators to write with our letters what were originally written in other forms of writing or Latin letters. In the Hebrew of the Old Testament, for instance, there are two letters that we just keep silent when we read them in English because we can’t duplicate the guttural sounds that they represent. Also, we can’t be sure, without any recordings of how they spoke, exactly how they pronounced the words that were written down.

“Melchizedek” appears in two different sources in the Old Testament. First he is part of a story about Abraham in Genesis. Then he is mentioned in King David’s Psalm 110. From these brief passages the writer of Hebrew says this about Melchizedek in chapter 7:

This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, the name Melchizedek means “king of righteousness”; then also, “king of Salem” means “king of peace.” Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.

Is the writer of Hebrews making a big deal about nothing?

Though Melchizedek is only briefly mentioned in the Old Testament, there was more written about him among the Jewish rabbis. He was associated with thoughts about God’s chosen one, the Messiah, what was called in Greek, “Christ.” Since that time all kinds of theories have come out about this Melchizedek, but they are just theories. They only add to the mystery and bring up more questions than answers. Think about all the theories that have come up over the years about the assassination of John F. Kennedy. The more outrageous they are, the more interested people seem to be with them. So it is with theories about Melchizedek.

But why would people want those kinds of explanations? It isn’t just a matter of curiosity. It gives us the sense that we can better explain those things and have greater control over them. We like connections to make things logical and better for us to control. A famous

British historian, James Burke, has made a career showing how things in history connect. For instance he uses the development of canning food to feed armies as the basis for the development of the internal combustion engine—what drives our cars.

People in Jesus' time liked the connection between the priests and their religion. To be a priest, like Zechariah the father of John the Baptist, you had to trace your ancestry back to the tribe of Levi, the tribe of Moses' brother Aaron who was the first high priest. The priests performed sacrifices according to the specifics given in the Old Testament. The whole book of Leviticus is an instruction book for priests. People liked that because they felt that if they followed the rules, they would get results. God would then protect and bless them. It was a part of all those laws they tried to keep about saying the correct words, doing the assigned rituals, eating the proper foods, and associating with the right people.

Today we try to do the same with “self-help” programs. People used to buy a lot of “self-help books, but now you can get a ton of information online. The idea is that you follow the right steps and then get the right results.

But Melchizedek is so different from the Levitical priests. There is no ancestry that can be traced to him. As the writer of Hebrews says of him: “Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life.” He just came and went in that story with Abraham.

For the writer of Hebrews this means:

Just think how great Melchizedek was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, from their fellow Israelites—even though they also are descended from Abraham. This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. And without doubt the lesser is blessed by the greater. In the one case, the tenth is collected by people who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living. One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.

With that in mind the book of Hebrews describes Jesus as a priest from the order of Melchizedek, not Levi. Why? Because Jesus is a greater priest than any from Levi. They came and died. But Jesus, in the order of Melchizedek, is eternal.

The very mysterious background of Melchizedek is proof that this is something from God, not humans. When the early Christians were placed before the Jewish high council in Acts 5, many wanted to kill them. But we read these words from a man named Gamaliel:

Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him.

He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.

Not knowing where they were from gave Gamaliel the concern that Jesus' disciples could be from God. And seeing where Jesus and His followers went, to spreads throughout the world—shows us He is from God. This is not something people can control or figure out. This, like salvation itself, is solely from God.

That says something to our faith. While we are tempted to have something like the priests of Levi, something we can control and use as a tool to help ourselves, our future lies in God's hands, not ours. We see this even in Jesus:

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverent submission. Son though He was, He learned obedience from what He suffered and, once made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Jesus, though He is God Himself, did not seek to control the events that led to His death on the cross. Instead He put trust in His Father to make that all happen. In doing that He not only saved us, but showed us the way we can be trusting in God, not what we think is best.

Melchizedek—a mystery to us just as God is a part from what He has shown us in His Son, Christ Jesus.

Creed Hymn: “I Bind unto Myself Today” – Hymn #604

Prayer of the Church:

P: Lord in Your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

Sharing Our Ministry:

Offering and Voluntary:

Service of the Sacrament p. 208

Preface: p. 208

P: It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord,

who overcame the assaults of the devil and gave His life as a ransom for many, that with cleansed hearts we might be prepared joyfully to celebrate the passover feast in sincerity and truth. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and singing . . .

Sanctus: (*Holy, Holy, Holy*) p. 208

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

P: We give thanks to You Lord God for have defeated evil by the life, death, and resurrection of Your Son, Christ Jesus offered himself up as the perfect sacrifice and ransom for our sins. Send Your Holy Spirit so that we come to this meal trusting that He give us His true body and blood to forgive us and strengthen us to go and serve others in love. We pray the prayer Jesus taught us . . .

Lord's Prayer, The Words of Our Lord, and Pax Domini: (*Peace of the Lord*) p. 209

Agnus Dei: (*"Lamb of God"*) p. 210

Distribution of Holy Communion:

"The Infant Priest Was Holy Born" - **Hymn #624**

"No Temple Now, No Gift of Price" – **Hymn #530**

Nunc Dimittis: (*"Now Let Us Depart"*) p. 211

Prayer after Communion:

P: Lord God, we thank you for your perfect obedience and your humble service. Help us to go from here trusting in your love and, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

Benedicamus and Benediction: p. 212

Closing Hymn: *"Christ Be My Leader"* - **Hymn #861**

Postlude